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C O N F I D E N T I A L LAGOS 001708

SIPDIS

TRANSPORTATION FOR FAA  
DAKAR PLS PASS TO FAA REP ED JONES  
ROME PLS PASS TO TSA REP JOHN HALINSKI

E.O. 12958: DECL: 10/31/2015  
TAGS: CASC FAIR NI ASEC PREL  
SUBJECT: BELLVIEW CRASH: NOVEMBER 1 UPDATE

REF: A. LAGOS 1675 AND PREVIOUS

1B. ACCRA 2205

Classified By: Consul General Brian L. Browne for 1.5 (D).

11. (C) Summary. Excavation of crash site began October 31 with the National Transportation and Security Board (NTSB) team and USG forensics team both at the site. The NTSB team have not yet found the flight data nor cockpit voice recorders. Forensic team members observed that officials from Ogun State tried to speed the pace of the excavation, thereby impinging on the authority of Director of Accidents Investigation and Prevention Bureau (AIPB) Angus Ozoka. The forensics team also complained that 45 Nigerian police located on site did nothing to assist the USG team collect forensic evidence. The Consul General (CG) spoke to Aviation Minister Borishade to secure the site, and allow the excavation process to move according to the forensic team's schedule. Aviation Minister Borishade agreed police trained in forensics needed to participate in the investigation. Staff in Lagos and Abuja also contacted senior police officials about the need for police involvement in the forensic aspects of this investigation. End Summary.

12. (C) The forensic team complained that Ogun State officially ordered the use of heavy equipment to begin excavating the site without consulting AIPB Director and lead investigator in charge of the site, Angus Ozoka regarding the pace of the excavation. Apparently, the Ogun State officials were more fixated on recovery of plane parts than on collecting victims remains and personal effects. While the Nigerian pathologists were helpful, the Nigerian police did not assist the forensic team in recovery of victims remains. According to the forensic team, the Ogun State officials partially succeeded in usurping some of the AIPB Director's control over the excavation. Fortunately, not very much work was done yesterday.

13. (C) The CG spoke November 1 with Ogun State Information Commissioner Niran Malaolu and Aviation Minister Babalola Borishade regarding the difficulties the forensics team encountered October 31 at the crash site. At the CG's suggestions, Minister Borishade agreed that a fence securing the crash site was needed, that politicians should not attempt to control the excavation, that aerial photos of the area and the scene were in order, and that the pace of excavation should be tempered to allow the forensic team time to conduct its painstaking work. Commissioner Malaolu promised to pass our request to Governor Daniel that Ogun State officials desist from inserting themselves into the excavation process.

14. (C) The NTSB team met Bellview representatives today to go over documenting evidence and information regarding the Bellview flight 3210 flight crew. Many aviation contacts claim Bellview had been routinely overworking their pilots (see reftel B) and the company had been under increasing financial distress.

15. (C) Comment. Given the high public profile this accident has assumed and the surge of media and emotions around this event, it will be a challenge for the investigators to keep the scene completely clear of exogenous actors. We have made the necessary contacts, and senior officials have agreed to the necessary steps. However, this must be translated to their staff at site. We will continue to push for these and other steps in order to make the scene as secure as possible and to make the investigation be as effective as possible under these extenuating conditions. The Nigerian police need to play a more active role in the forensics process to ensure that the investigation does not become a USG-led operation whereby Nigerian police and staff simply stand and watch without assisting. End Comment.

BROWNE